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ABSTRACT

This paper addresses the need for special education students to learn appropriate work-related oral language and personal/social oral competencies to enhance their success in transition/career-oriented endeavors. It emphasizes the need for an interdisciplinary approach in developing these skills. The paper begins with a historical perspective, outlining the impact of various federal laws on services. The paper then analyzes the status of special education students in the work place, their need for communication skills and social competencies, and aspects of current programming. The Words for Work model is depicted; it shows that the ability to be socially competent radiates from the ability to communicate effectively. Finally, the outer circle of the model implies that success in family, academic, occpuational, social/personnel, and leisure activities radiates from the abilitiy to be communicatively and socially skilled. (33 references) (JDD)

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Words for Work

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WORDS FOR WORK

by:

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Introduction

Words for Work will address the need for students who are enrolled in special education to learn appropriate work related oral language and work related personal-social oral competencies to enhance their success in transition/career oriented endeavors. It will emphasize the need for special education teachers, vocational-technical instructors, and speech/language pathologists to work together to develop these skills through the use of strategies which more adequately prepare students in these complex skills.

Words for Work, presented in this paper, will focus on those students who need to acquire oral language and personal-social competencies to help assure they develop their fullest potential prior to entering the work place. A rational for examination of current curriculums in transition/career education will be presented with the concept of multidisciplinary collaboration being at the core of emerging curriculums for middle-school and secondary-school aged special education students and vocational-technical schools.

Historical Perspective

Since the 1960s, legislation has been passed in an attempt to provide job and training opportunities to students with disabilities. The Vocational Education Act of 1963 urged vocational education to be more responsive to the needs of handicapped individuals, while The Vocational Rehabilitation Act of 1973 provided for equal employment opportunity for work for handicapped students where Federal grants

and contracts were covered. By providing handicapped students between the ages of three and twenty-one years with appropriate educational services, The Education of All Handicapped Children Act of 1975 added strength to legislation on vocational training (Lerner, 1981). In 1978, The Career Education Incentive Act was passed with the intent of establishing career education from kindergarten through the twelfth grade during the period the legislation was in place, while in 1984, two pieces of legislation were passed which addressed services for the handicapped and made certain guarantees regarding preparation to join the work force upon leaving the nations secondary and vocational schools (Lagomarcino & Rusch, 1987). These were the Education of Handicapped Act Amendment (P.L. 98-199) and the Carl D. Perkins Vocational Education Act (P.L. 98-524). West, Gritzmacher, Johnson, Boyer-Stephens, and Dunafon (1986), summarized P.L. 98-199 as providing strategies and techniques to lead independent living, establishment of demonstration models for vocational, transition, and job placement services, provision of demographic studies on the numbers of handicapping conditions and the services they required, initiation of collaborative models for the provision of services, and the development of procedures for evaluating transition programs. West, et al (1986) summarized P.L. 98-524 as guaranteeing appropriate assessment procedures, provision of counseling and guidance, the addition of an extra year to complete a job training program, notification to parents and students about opportunities and options by the time the student in enrolled in the 9th grade, inclusion of vocational education services in the IEP, and counseling services aimed at facilitating the transition from school to work.

Status of Special Education Students in the Work Place

Even with legislation in place emphasizing opportunities for appropriate educational training and equal opportunities in the work place for a significant period of time, it is generally recognized that most special education programming efforts have been designed toward the remediation of academic deficits (Schumaker & Hazel, 1984). It is also generally recognized that a difficulty in learning encompasses more than academic difficulties and these difficulties cannot be treated separately from the student's social and emotional needs (Lerner, 1989). According to Wanat (1983), "The self-concept of these children is not improved by their academic underachievements, but it does not seem appropriate to assume academic success automatically will lead to social expertise" (p.35).

The efficacy of legislation designed to provide appropriate education and adequacy in career preparation for students with disabilities is being questioned (Lagomarcino & Rusch, 1987; Bellamy, Wilcox, Rose, & McDonnell, 1985). According to Bellamy, et al (1985), between 50-80% of working-age adults who report a disability are jobless with the methods of collecting data probably resulting in undercounting these individuals. Similarly high rates of special-education graduates who are jobless, receiving low wages, making slow progress toward employment, and being segregated from their non-disabled peers was reported. Roessler, Johnson, and Schriner (1988), reported estimates of unemployment among disabled youth run as high as 75-80%. In 1984, Will approximated 8% of the nations's gross national product was expended on programs for the disabled and these were primarily related to supporting dependency on others and on agencies. West, et al.

(1986) indicated 85% of those handicapped individuals who were employed earned less than $2,000.

Communication Skills and Social Competencies of Special Education Students

The need to train the handicapped in communication skills and social competencies to add to their prospects for successful social and work relationship after leaving special education and transition/career oriented programs is well documented.

Smith (1989) gave an excellent protrayal of the social skill problems seen in the learning disabled. Figures 1 and 2 illustrate the relationship of various social skills and depict the complex nature of social development which many students in special education and vocational-technical programs do not acquire in the normal course of development. These skills must be addressed if students in these programs are to be successful in the work place. To assist in the development of this premise, the following key terms are defined: Social Cognition; Social Interaction; Social Competence; Pragmatic Language, and Communication:

> Social cognition is the ability to gather information from the social field, process that information, determine its importance, and formulate a direction for positive action" (Smith, 1989, p.125).

> Social interaction requires complex skills and abilities that interplay with each other. A number of skills contribute to successful social interactions: eye contact, duration and latency of replies, compliance, requesting new behaviors or topics, loudness of speech, gestures, and general affect" (Smith, 1989, p.129).

> Social competence is the general construct under which social skills training exists. Social competence can be assigned to individuals who are proficient in and generalize their use of social skills" (Smith, 1989, p.132).

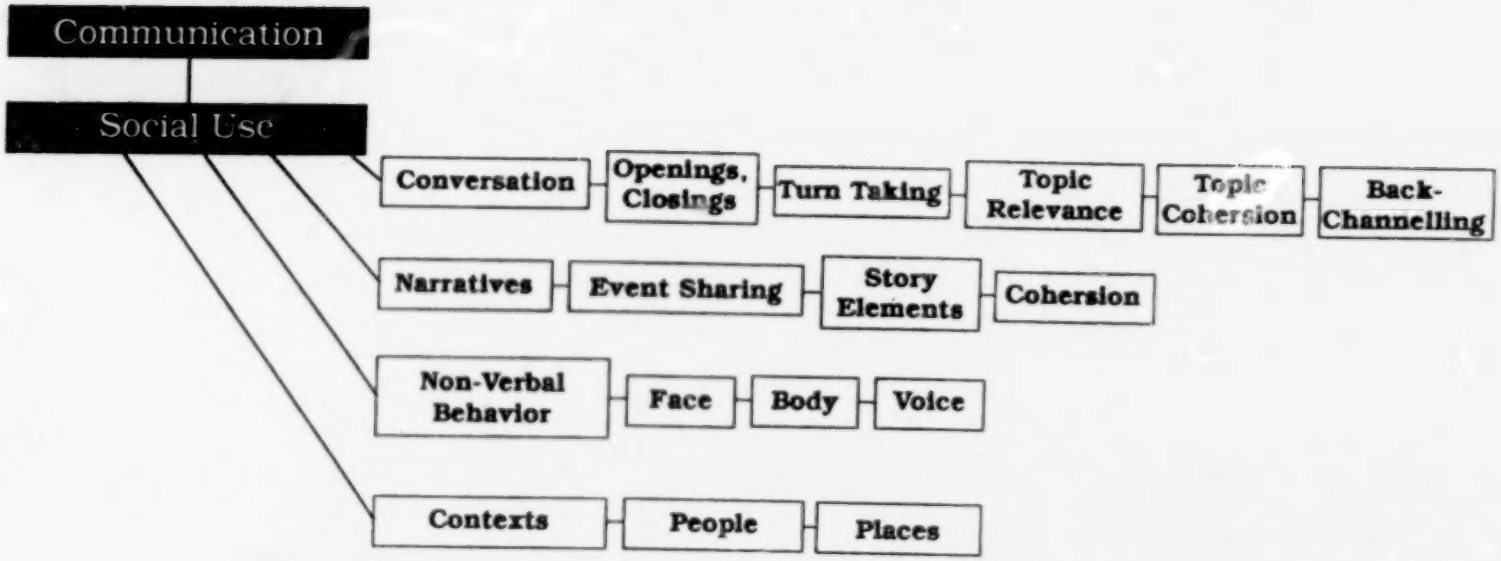

Figure 1. *(Source: adapted from Smith, 1989, p. 152)*

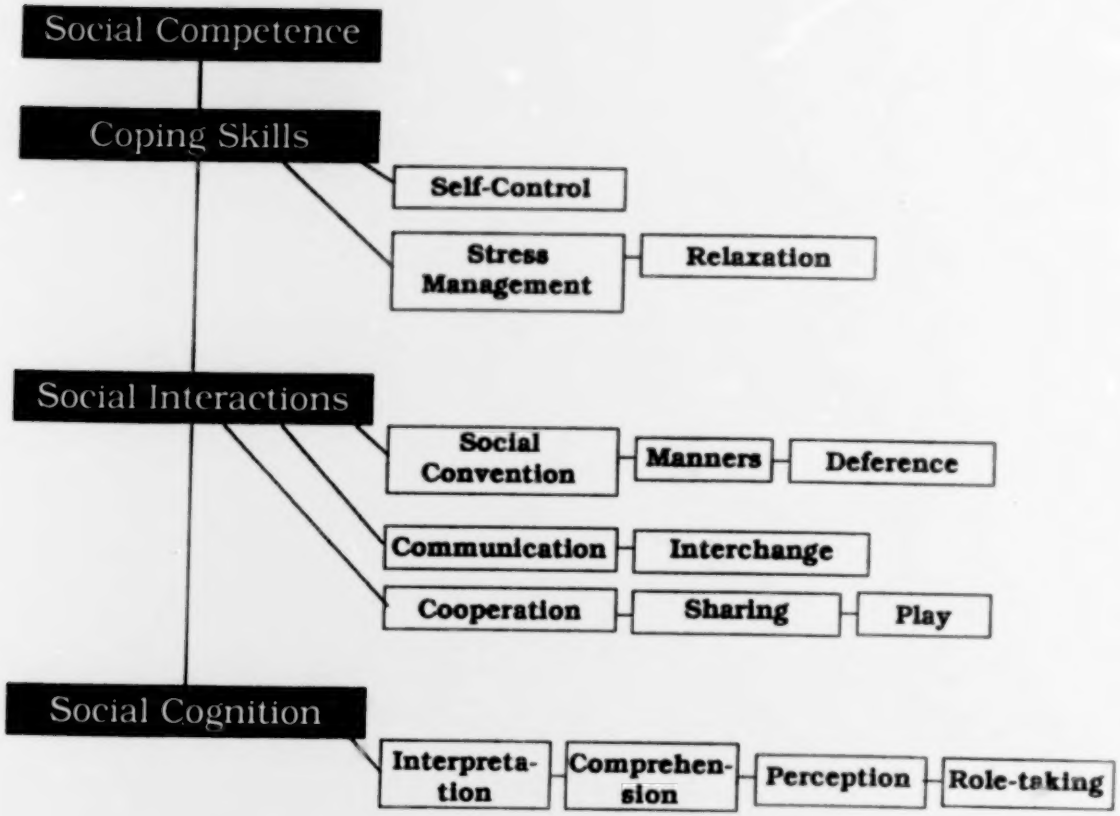

Figure 2. *(Source : adapted from Smith, 1989, p. 152)*

> Pragmatics is, "...(1) the use of language for different goals or functions, (2) the use of information from the context to determine what we say in order to achieve the goals, and (3) the use of the interaction between persons to initiate, maintain, and terminate conversations" (Lahey, 1988, p.15).

> The word 'communicate'...translated literally to mean impart or participate. More specifically, it means to share by all. When applied to American English it refers to the act of imparting information that can be understood by all who use the same language system. The meaning is intended to be common to the expressor(s) and receiver(s)" (Webber, 1981, p.5).

According to Smith (1989), the individual must adhere to the social use of language regarding context, nonverbal behaviors, appropriate conversational and narrative patterns if they are to be effective in the community, work place, and school. Many of these behaviors, such as adjusting language for different people in different settings, learning conversational rules (Carrow-Woolfolk & Lynch, 1982), knowing the rules for turn taking in conversations (Roth & Speckman, 1984), and knowing how to select words to influence the listener (Romer & Heller, 1983) are normally learned at relatively young ages.

Communicative competence in populations of special students is frequently lacking. The learning disabled frequently have problems in establishing peer relationships, lack of understanding of the use of language in social contexts, and poor conversational skills (Bryan, Donahue, & Pearl, 1981; Bryan, 1977; Donahue, 1983, & Donahue & Bryan, 1984). It can also be concluded that in the mentally handicapped, functional language skills are deficit, but their social-cognitive skills should be related to their social age. Authors McLean and Synder-McLean (1978) have indicated that many retarded individuals are deficient in the area of pragmatic language. Kauffman (1988)

pointed out that the behaviorally disordered, while not social isolates, display a lack of social sensitivity or ineptness' in their relationships with others making their first approaches to members of the opposite sex and their fist jobs without tack, being unskilled in the social skills necessary for acceptance.

In reference to social incompetencies, Lerner (1989) believes that not all learning-disabled young people display social incompetencies. She identified three groups of learning disabled: (1) those who have both social disabilities and academic disabilities; (2) those who have social disabilities, but do well in academic learning, and (3) those who have academic problems and are competent socially. She described the student lacking sensitivity to people and a poor perception of social situations as the "...most crippling disabilities the student can have" (p.470). This lack of sensitivity to people and situations can result in the inappropriate use of language which Donahue and Bryan (1984) related to the following:

> (1) they may not have important conversational skills behaviors in their repertorie or (2) they may have already acquired these skills but have difficulty in perceiving which social situations call for their use, or (3) their awareness of their difficulty in communication interactions may lead them to avoid use of conversational strategies which place greater demands on their linguistic resources (p.253).

Bigge (1988), in Curriculum Based Instruction For Special Education Students, spoke to the adjustment problems of the special education student to the work environment. She concluded they must be taught the necessary skills to adjust as the work

environment is seen as the most crucial factor in acquiring and maintaining a position in the work place. The failure frequently encountered by special education students included their inability to get along with employers, poor attendance and punctuality, poor personal appearance and manners, and irregularity of moods and behaviors. She cited successful employment appeared to be directly related to motivation and the ability to adjust and respond to the vocational and social demands of the job situation.

In preparing the mildly handicapped students for the work place, Vatour, Johnson, and Kolek (1983) found they had unrealistic impressions of their strengths and weaknesses and what their goals were after high school, had little awareness of the work available to them, were unfamiliar with the vocabulary of the work place, had poor behaviors in following directions, task completion, and assuming responsibility for their actions.

In reviewing the research related to the social skills of the behaviorally disordered, Schloss, Schloss, Wood, and Kiehl (1986) found supervisors in the work place considered the social competency of communication skills to be a critical factor to achieving success. It was found to be more important than having specific occupational skills. According to Kaufmann (1988), the behaviorally disordered frequently make their first approaches to members of the opposite sex and their first jobs without tact, being unskilled in the social skills necessary for acceptance.

Aspects of Current Programming

As a result of the movement of the special education student from the traditional middle-school and secondary-school special education

into a more functional, work related training atmosphere, speech/language pathology has come to review its traditional models of intervention. The current literature reflects the need for students to better generalize language skills acquired in the course of intervention and to become adept at the appropriate use of language in social discourse. The need for collaboration between the special educator and the speech/language pathologist for purposes of designing intervention programs for special needs students is apparent (Seidenberg, 1985).

Alley and Deshler (1979) identified four major types of intervention techniques currently used with language impaired adolescents. It is at the middle-school and secondary-school level where students would receive the more concentrated efforts in transition/career education. The intervention techniques and their intent described were: (1) Basic Skills Approach to reading, writing, and mathematics; (2) Functional Curriculum Approach, to learn survivial skills to facilitate independence; (3) Tutorial Approach, to provide instruction in the content area(s) that are weak, and (4) Learning Strategies Approach, to present processes for learning, or how to learn, not to present what to learn, or the product. According to Larson and McKinley (1985):

> Adolescents are excellent candidates for the learning strategies approach if they read at or above the third-grade level, if they learn from both symbolic and concrete tasks, and if they have average intellectual capacities. An advantage of this approach is that it allows for immediate changes in behavior and for generalizing those behaviors to other situations (p.71).

Larson and McKinley (1985) recommended teaching communication skills in natural contexts, utilizing group sessions that stressed the

the process of using appropriate communication, and counseling regarding the result of their language disorders on academics, their personal/social abilities, and their desired vocational goals.

Boyce and Larson, cited in Larson and McKinley (1985), recommended the utilization of a model which placed an emphasis on pragmatic language, placing phonology, syntax, and semantics under the functional use of language. This model was recommended because "...it emphasizes learning language features within the framework of daily living situations and it emphasizes client understanding of why a particular goal has been chosen--the purpose or use of the communication activity is always at the forefront" (p.72).

In language programming for the mentally handicapped, Drew, Logan, and Hardman (1988) stressed functional programs in the use of receptive and expressive skills. Functional receptive language skills were identified as "essential" as one must acquire the ability to listen and comprehend the communication of others, such as in job interviews and carrying on conversations. Functional expressive language skills included telephone skills, responding to questions, and carrying on an appropriate conversation.

Programming for special needs students, according to Polloway, Patton, Payne and Payne (1989) should not emphasize grammatical and articulation errors. Instead, these students should be provided experiences to facilitate social interaction through structuring activities which stress content and social skills.

McLean (1985) described the move to placing language intervention into the larger context as quite "logical" since children are expected to use language effectively and appropriately they need to learn it as

into the larger context as quite "logical" since children are expected to use language effectively and appropriately they need to learn it as a means for communicating instead of learning it "as a set of purely linquistic forms or structures" (p. 166). Seidenberg (1985) addressed the roles of the speech-language pathologist with the multiplied impaired as ranging from direct intervention, to serving as a consultant to the classroom, to be used as only a "related" service not necessary in the intervention process of those with other handicapping conditions.

Throughout the 1980s, there has been increased interest in social skills deficiencies particularly among the learning disabled suggesting that increasing these skills should be a high priority through language intervention (Wallace & McLoughlin, 1985; Donahue & Bryan, 1983). The role of the special educator in working with the behaviorally disordered in the acquisition of social cues and appropriate responses was noted by Kauffman (1988) when he stated "...remediation of interpersonal ineptness is clearly a functional view for the special educator..." (p. 342).

Several studies have indicated that social skills training can be effective with learning disabled adolescents. It has also been shown these are generalizable skills. Wanat (1983), in a study of learning disabled secondary students who received social skills awareness training, concluded social skills programs in the learning disabilities classroom are effective when the teachers of these students understand and appreciate the need for utilizing a more humanistic attitude toward the classroom setting. Whang, Fawcett, and Mathews (1984) conducted a study to establish the effects of social skills training

on everyday employment situations. This study suggested "...that the training procedures were effective in increasing the job-related social skills performed by learning disabled adolescents in analogue situations" (p.36).

Hazel, Schumaker, Sherman, and Sheldon (1982) compared the social-skills performance of normally achieving high-school students, learning disabled students, and juvenile delinquents on eight general social skills and found significant differences among the three groups They found the learning disabled and other students with problems were similar but there were differences between the learning disabled and non-learning disabled on social skills performance.

Deshler, Schumaker, Warner, Alley, and Clark (1980) found learning disabled adolescents may have as many social interactions as non-learning disabled, but the quality or skill they exhibit may be less successful. They concluded, "...if...LD adolescents are deficient in a wide range of social skills, appropriate remediation programs should be developed to help them compete in a world where interactions with others often determine success" (p.399).

In an effort to identify procedures to change the learning disabled adolescents social skill performance and to learn to generalize the skills learned, Schmaker and Hazel (1984) included manipulation of antecedent and consequent events to increase occurance of desirable social behaviors while decreasing the use of undesirable social behaviors, self-control procedures, instructional procedures of a descriptive oral nature or of a modeling/demonstration nature and rehearsal and feedback procedures to facilitate self-direction.

WORDS FOR WORK Model

The model presented in Words for Work, Figure 3, depicts communication at the center of the representation. At this point of the model, and according to the terminology reviewed, pragmatic language and communication could be used interchangeably. Radiating from one's ability to communicate effectively, as depicted in Figure 3, is one's ability to be socially competent. As the selected terminology portrays, social competence is a general construct which encompasses, among other things, social cognition and social interaction. These terms, social cognition and social interaction as defined, carry with them an implication of language competency in one's ability to be socially effective. Fianlly, the outer circle of the Words for Work model implies that radiating from the ability to be communicatively and socially skilled, lies one's interrelated successes in family, academic, occupation, social/personal, and leisure activities.

Rational and Summary

Since transition/career education may be an integral part of the exceptional student's program, special educators, vocational/technical educators, and speech/language pathologists must be cognizant of addressing social skills and communication abilities in the on-going daily activities in that setting. There is a need to develop a systematic, multi-disciplined approach to curriculum development in the transition/career program to help assure these students leave the programs with appropriate social and language skills for the job to compliment the job-training skills they will take with them.

Words for Work

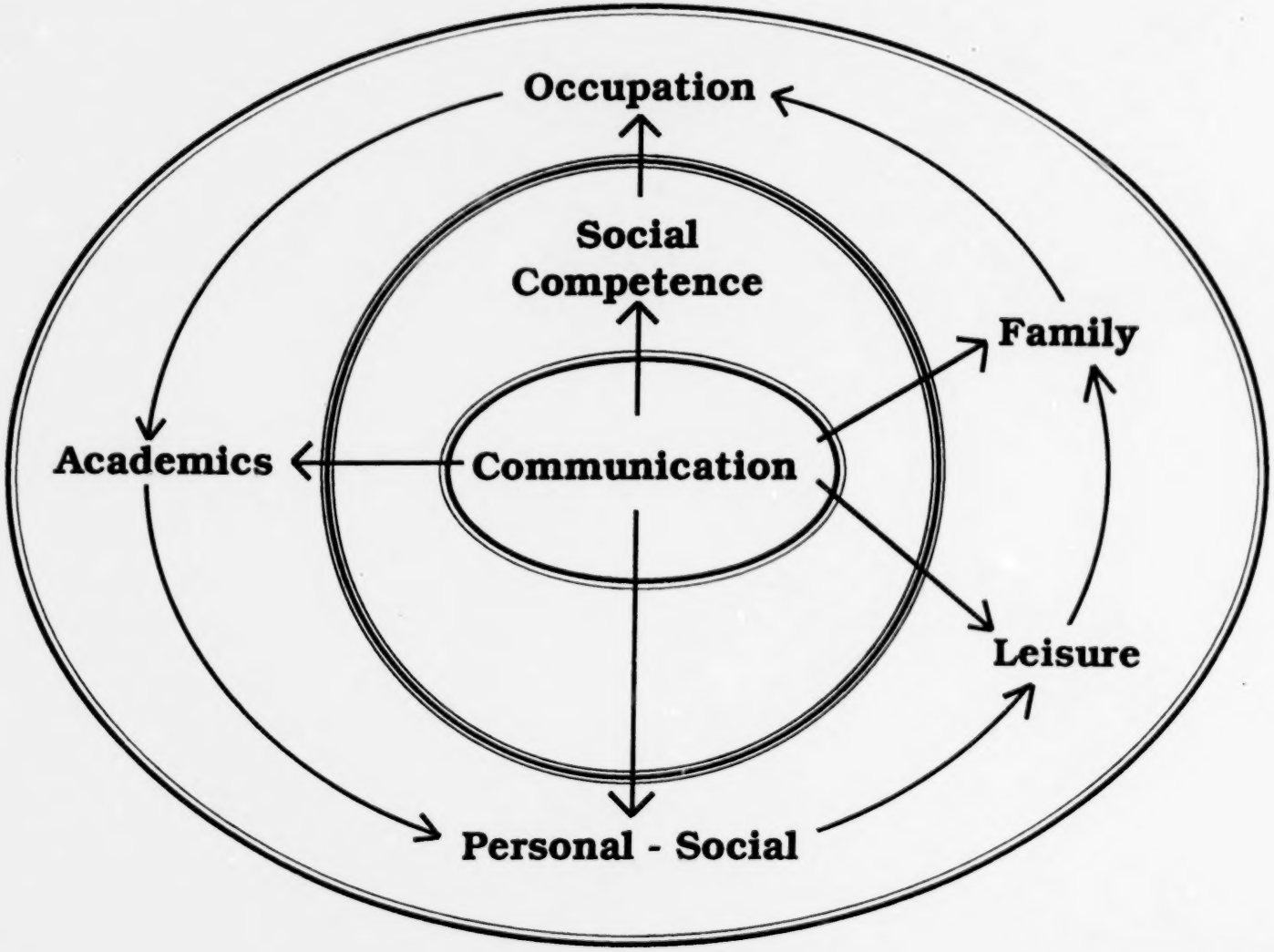

Figure 3: Model for Words for Work

WORDS FOR WORK
Part I
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